

# Mobile Pre-Positioning

*A simple but effective CSS technique  
For a battalion task force*

by Captain Scott Maxwell

While Army doctrine is well defined in the areas of tactics and operations, many gaps exist when it comes to doctrine for CSS planning and execution. Our FMs and ARTEPs offer little to guide the CSS executor in the “how” of getting the beans and bullets to the troops in the tanks.

Perhaps the best reference available is *FM 71-123*. This FM gives some excellent techniques available to the battalion’s CSS players in terms of planning resupply operations and executing LOGPACs. But what can the battalion do when planning isn’t enough and regular LOGPACs aren’t flexible enough to meet the battalion commander’s battlefield requirements? In an environment such as the National Training Center, the need to address CSS operations out of the ordinary is not only important, it is necessary.

While *FM 71-123* mentions a few alternate resupply methods, it offers little detail on any of them. One of these methods, however, mobile pre-positioning (MPP), turned out to be one of the most effective techniques our battalion found for addressing our dynamic CSS requirements and fluid battlefield demands during our recent NTC rotation. MPP is just what its name implies: locating loaded resupply vehicles forward on the battlefield. Employment of MPP not only gives a task force much more flexibility in the responsiveness of mission-generated demands, but the decreased lead time for resupply operations greatly enhances the commander’s ability to re-arm and refit before the enemy can.

**Organization.** We organized our MPP similar to a LOGPAC, led by the support platoon leader and using his haul assets. As with a LOGPAC, he briefed drivers on their loads and identified which companies they would resupply before the MPP rolled out. We sent the support platoon sergeant out with the MPP as well, ensuring additional FM communications capability while the MPP was on the move.

**Configuration.** Normally, our MPP consisted of Classes III(B), III(P), and V packages loaded on the support platoon trucks, as for normal LOGPAC. Ideally, the MPP would be a push of unit basic load, from which combat elements would take what they required to return them to a “GREEN” UBL status. We also placed any special III or V requirements for follow-on missions in the MPP load. Such special requirements were normally identified through detailed CSS planning during the battalion orders process.

Depending upon the CSS situation when the MPP moved out from the field trains, other classes of supply could be pushed forward as well. For example, Class I MRE cycles, Class II and IV items needed for follow-on missions, or medium-priority Class IX parts could be prepositioned to arrive as early as possible.

**MPP execution.** Because the MPP wasn’t always necessary, we only used it when the S4 determined that scheduled LOGPACs would not be sufficient to meet timely or unanticipated logistical needs — usually on battle days. If we decided an MPP would be used, it departed the field trains shortly before daybreak to a concealed position well outside the BSA, as well as outside enemy cannon artillery range. Choosing such a location increased the survivability of critical CSS assets in the MPP by taking them out of the enemy’s deep operations target areas.

During the offense, the MPP continued to follow the battle by moving from one concealed position to another, while staying out of enemy cannon range and away from templated air avenues of approach. In the defense, the MPP made periodic survivability moves. Sometimes, these moves would place the MPP further from the task force than the BSA. However, due to the responsiveness of the pre-configured and pre-loaded MPP, the time/distance tradeoff still worked to our favor. In both the offense and de-

fense, it is best, as with all CSS actions, for the MPP’s repositioning to be linked directly with OPFOR or friendly events. For example, in the offense, the MPP may key off of the reserve company executing phase lines, or destruction of particular enemy echelons in the defense.

As soon as a lull in the battle occurred, or the brigade gave the battalion a change of mission order, the MPP rolled into action. A hasty LRP site was selected by the S4 from existing CSS graphics, and Class III/V resupply occurred as would a normal LOGPAC — company team first sergeants met their “breaks” at the LRP site, resupplied their companies, and returned the breaks to the LRP by a predesignated time. Since the MPP could be on the road within ten minutes of being called, companies had little wait time for their critical resupply. If the S4 is able to anticipate the battlefield lulls before they occur, rolls the MPP early, and selects an LRP closer to the resupplied units, the wait time for an MPP resupply can be even less. This may be critical, for example, when the company teams run lower than anticipated on Class V fighting the OPFOR AGMB, and the battalion commander still has yet to meet the first echelon MRB. If the battalion commander has to wait for the supplies to get loaded and then moved forward from the field trains, he may have to wait too long to win the overall fight.

**What about CTCP emergency resupply?** MPP is not intended to replace CTCP emergency resupply. A CTCP prepo is used to give individual vehicles or specific units enough Class III and V to sustain immediate combat — it is unpredicted opportunity resupply. MPP is used to resupply the entire task force to bring them up to a full UBL — it is a planned resupply at an unplanned time and place.

**What about LOGPAC?** When the MPP is used by the battalion for quick resupply, the trucks still have to return to the

---

field trains to top off. Depending upon how the brigade operates, it is quite likely that they will not be able to receive essential supply classes until the BSA is prepared to issue them — which may be well after the normal LOGPAC time. In this case, the MPP must take the place of the UBL resupply of the scheduled LOGPAC. The LOGPAC itself, or what remains of it, must still continue as scheduled to push forward replacements, difficult to move or timely items, and non-critical supplies to the units, such as hot Class I, personnel replacements, low-priority repair parts, and so on.

Quite often, however, the MPP will not be used for resupply, or will have only issued a small portion of what it carries. When this happens, the MPP must link up with the remaining LOGPAC elements from the field trains for the scheduled battalion LOGPAC LRP. Depending upon time requirements, the MPP may either return to the field trains altogether, or the supply sergeants may move forward to the MPP hide location under the direction of the HHC first sergeant or XO.

*Advantages and disadvantages.* Using an MPP afforded us several benefits to our battalion's operations:

- By being positioned outside of the BSA, the MPP increased survivability of critical CSS assets. This was especially true when the MPP locations were carefully selected to avoid enemy ground and air avenues of approach and downwind chemical hazards.

- As the MPP can roll in just a few minutes, the battalion maximized CSS response time, while minimizing the crises that CSS executors had to react to in order to meet unexpected CSS demands and timelines.
- The battalion commander increased the flexibility of his combat elements, allowing them to resupply, reposition, and return to the fight without having to wait for them to rearm and refuel in the midst of the direct fire battle.
- The MPP also supported continuous operations better than a scheduled LOGPAC by ensuring continual resupply of forward combat elements. No company was left without ammo or fuel. In 24-hour operations, the FSB should be more flexible in topping off battalion elements, making continual resupply by MPP practicable.

Of course, the MPP has its potential drawbacks as well:

- Drivers may get less sleep.
- The support platoon leader and platoon sergeant may not be present to assist LOGPAC elements in the field trains prepare and execute. This drawback may be overcome by ensuring other CSS players are capable of supervising LOGPAC operations in the field trains. We used our HHC supply sergeant to conduct pre-combat checks and ensure the remaining LOGPAC elements were prepared to depart the field trains on time. Our support platoon leader normally was able to return to the field trains in time to lead the LOGPAC for-

ward to the scheduled LRP. Depending on how your unit utilizes the HHC XO, he may be available to bring the LOGPAC forward when the support platoon leader cannot.

- The support platoon leader and platoon sergeant may also not be present to assist in advising the HHC commander on changing CSS demands projected by the S4. The impact of this may be lessened, however, by detailed asset tracking within the field trains CP. If the FTCP can identify on-hand supply quantities at the field trains, on the MPP, and positioned forward at the combat trains, and can quickly assess the support platoon's maintenance status, then the HHC commander can reasonably estimate his CSS capabilities and relay them to battalion.

We found MPP to be an exceptionally flexible and beneficial technique for executing battlefield resupply. For MPP to be successful, however, CSS leaders must be capable of independent action and careful anticipation of CSS demands during the fight.

---

*CPT Scott Maxwell enlisted in the USAR as a 19D cavalry scout (M113) in 1988. He was commissioned in Armor in 1993 from USMA. He has served as a tank and scout platoon leader in 1-4 Cavalry and as LNO, S3/Air, and HHC XO in 2-34 Armor. He is currently stationed at Fort Knox for AOAC, CAS3, and CLC. His next assignment is at Fort Polk.*